

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 14, 2012_____

Agenda Item: Proposed Travelers' Rest State Park Donation and Acquisition

Division: Parks

Action Needed: _____ Approval of Tentative Rule
 Endorse Course of Action

X Approval of Final Rule/Action
None - information only

Background

Montana State Parks proposes to acquire approximately 24 acres of land, a visitor center building and museum, complete with a museum collection at Travelers' Rest State Park in Lolo.

This land is contiguous to the park and consists of 3 parcels. Parcel A is approximately 10 acres in size and is comprised largely of riparian habitat along Lolo Creek. The dep

partment holds a conservation easement on this property and the acquisition would allow for further public access to Lolo Creek and consistent management. Parcel B is approximately 12 acres and is currently used for grazing. This parcel would connect the park to US Highway 12, preserving the park entrance from development and creating important trail linkage through the park connecting non-motorized trails along Highway 12 and Highway 93. Parcel C houses the museum and visitor center and park offices for Travelers' Rest, Fort Owen and Painted Rocks State Parks. This parcel is currently leased by Montana FWP for these purposes.

The land and buildings are currently in private ownership and the landowners are offering a significant bargain sale. Montana FWP is proposing a multi-faceted funding stream to complete this acquisition. Currently, \$402,500 of Land and Water Conservation Fund monies would be used and matched with \$247,500 from the Missoula County Open Space Bond Fund and will be completed by a \$50,000 community fundraising effort spearheaded by the Travelers' Rest Preservation and Heritage Association and the Missoula Community Foundation. The owners are offering a bargain sale discount of \$485,000 on the land and building, and will also donate historic artifacts and exhibits valued in excess of \$100,000.

Acquisition of this land would not only secure the park visitor center and museum, it will protect critical wildlife habitat in this urban area; provide a safe conduit for Lolo residents connecting the south and north parts of the community; and add an important buffer to this National Historic Landmark.

Public Involvement Process & Results

An Environmental Analysis has been prepared and is available to the public. Public comment yielded 18 comments of which 17 were in support. A Decision Notice has been issued, recommending acquisition of the property and building.

Alternatives and Analysis No Action Alternative:

FWP would not acquire the land. The landowners could pursue other options to sell and develop the land. Montana FWP would need to eventually construct a separate visitor center and office building for the park.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends approval by the Commission to proceed with the acquisition of these 3 parcels of land for inclusion at Travelers' Rest State Park.

Proposed Motion

“I move that the Department proceed with the acquisition of these 3 parcels of land as part of Travelers’ Rest State Park.”